

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 1/26/2011
HB 292

Montana Wildlife Federation Testimony on HB 292

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

My name is Ben Lamb, and I am the Conservation Director for State and National Issues for the Montana Wildlife Federation. MWF is Montana's oldest, and largest hunter/angler conservation organization, with approximately 7,500 members and 23 affiliated Rod and Gun clubs in Montana. Today we stand in opposition to HB 292.

59% of Montana's voters made a choice in November to maintain our current constitution. That, apparently, is not enough of a sign from the electorate to leave good enough alone.

HB 292 sets us down a path of confusion and could very likely impact our recreation economy. In fact, Montana's healthy and clean environment has developed a multibillion dollar sustainable economy based on our wildlife, forests and streams. These resources are held in trust for all Montanans. These resources belong to the MRL Engineer, the clerk at Wal mart, and the Teacher who works for less pay than other states so that they can live here, fish here and hunt here.

In Montana, Hunting and Fishing **alone** contribute over \$550 million to local economies. The vast majority of that money comes from Resident Hunters. For example, in 2010, Resident elk hunters spent almost 70 million dollars in small communities like Belt, Choteau and Havre. Compound that with Non-Residents, who spent roughly \$45 million, and it becomes clear that Montanan's ability to hunt and fish is vital to our economic engine as well as tonic to soothe us in our daily lives.

Montana's clean and cold waterways are major economic drivers as well. Especially in towns like Ovando, Livingston, Cascade and Wolf Creek. Montana's fishing economy, which thrives due to our clean and healthful environment, brings in literally, hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

The confusion created by this referendum is much harder to quantify. What does this mean for the quality of our hunting experience? Will be able to manage our valuable elk, deer and pronghorn populations or will there be that is deemed more "economically productive" than our hunting and angling heritage? Who makes this decision? This bill can only create confusion where none exists now.

So, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, Montana's clean and healthful environment does two things, it creates jobs, and it clearly allows for responsible natural resource development. We have to sit back and ask, if 59% of the voters said that this isn't important, what's the problem?